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Fifty years Varsity waterman; reminiscences of 'Ted' Phillips – 1919

THE name of Phillips has been prominent in university and town boating circles for over a century.

Altogether five brothers have put in 214 years beside the Cam.

Steven was employed at Searle's boatyard, his brother Bill has worked on Logan's boatyard 53 years, George has been Christ's College boatman 40 years, Charlie at Pococks for 30 years, Alf has been connected with the river for 30 years and his son has recently been appointed boatman for Caius College.

Ted Phillips has been Light Blue Waterman or Badgeman for upwards of half a century and has coached hundreds over the courses in races. He has had under his supervision conspicuous Old Blues from all parts of the globe.

He started work at Searle's Boatyard at the age of 12. He was appointed Varsity Waterman in 1868.

The work is principally over the Varsity course preparing it for university racing by erecting starting and finishing posts, providing flags and pistols, to make necessary repairs to broken boats practicing if required, weed cutting for May races, ice-breaking when the river is frozen over, the firing of pistols at the railway bridge to warn crews in May and Lent races to proceed to starting posts and to regulate the boats in front of Ditton paddock by posts and punts for the summer races.

Before 1866 the crews were summoned to the course by a gun on Searle's Boatyard.

At that time, the crews in the races could only row over the Colquhoun course which terminated near the Railway Bridge which was then supported by struts and three arches.

During his experiences, he knew of only one coxswain who steered through one of the arches without the crew easing.

Since the iron girder bridge has been erected about 45 years ago the crews have rowed over the course from Baitsbite Lock to the Horse Grind, Old Chesterton.

In those early days, coaching of crews was performed from horseback or on foot and he remembers counting no less than 45 horses that were ferried over at The Pike and Eel in one single afternoon.

The Philips family was prominent in university and boating circles for more than a century

In 1897, two scullers smashed into one another at Grassy Corner and the bow of the 'funny' or light sculling boat penetrated the calf of the other sculler by nine inches to a foot.

Phillips came to the rescue and, with a saw, cut about three feet off. The boat and sculler were removed to The Plough Inn with the bow of the boat still piercing his leg and there had medical attention.

Pumping plant can cut costs – 1926

LAKENHEATH drainage commissioners tested the new oil-driven pumping plant and are satisfied with the performance which can cut down costs by at least 50 per cent.

Coal has hitherto been used, driving a beam engine erected in 1846 and, before that, a windmill driving a scoop wheel. All three generations – namely windmill, steam plant and the latest oil plant – may now be seen together.

Messrs Gwynnes of Hammersmith secured the contract for the machinery and they put in one of their invincible centrifugal pumps capable of pumping 110 to 130 tons per minute.

They used a Vickers Petter semi-diesel engine of 180 horsepower of the new cold head pattern.

The engine house is complete with overhead traveller and amongst the plant there is a water cooling ferro-concrete tank and also weatherproof fuel storage tanks holding 25 tons.

The main drain was filled up to the running mark and, in less than three hours, the drain was pumped down 2ft 6in lower than it was possible to do with the old steam plant. In fact, the commissioners saw the bottom of their train for the first time

The new plant is in an independent engine house set on piles.

The work was only started in September and has been carried on during the winter months.

Man made false claims for pension – 1909

A MELBOURN man was the first person to be charged for making a false declaration for the purposes of obtaining an old-age pension.

He had but a very hazy notion as to whether he was guilty or not.

He had stated that his income was four shillings a week and that he had no other means of subsistence whereas he got a weekly payment from a Benefit Society and a gratuity from a relative abroad.

He also drew rent from three cottages which took him well over the limit.

Complaints over bus vibrations – 1908

CHESTERTON Council is to write to the Motor Bus Company complaining of the vibration caused by the buses to houses on the route as they speed past at 12mph.

We feel that such vibration is the fault of Chesterton Road which is in a shocking condition.

It is the constant bumping of the bus over the volcanic-like ruts that shakes the buildings so.

The buses are a boon and blessing and we should be sorry to see anything which interferes with the swiftness and regularity of the admirable service.

A new pumping plant was installed at Lakenheath in 1926

Cleaning city streets – 1897

WILL you allow me a small space to refer to the arrangements for sweeping and cleaning Fitzroy Street?

After one gets one's place thoroughly cleaned and dusted, ready for business, we have three men commence sweeping the street and it is impossible sometimes to see across the road for dust.

After this is done and the cart takes the rubbish away the water cart makes its appearance about two hours later.

Considering that Fitzroy Street is one of the busiest streets of Cambridge, I think these things could be altered to the benefit of the tradespeople of the street.

'Shopkeeper'